DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 267 453 CS 505 138

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TITLE Teaching Values through Drama.
PUB DATE Aug 85
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Theatre Association (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 4-7, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acting; *Creative Dramatics; *Drama; *Dramatics; Elementary Secondary Education; Scripts; Skits; Teaching Methods; *Values Clarification; *Values Education

ABSTRACT

One dramatic technique to aid students in their discovery of values and value systems is "theatre-in-education" (TIE), a theatre event that takes place in schools, with actors working through roles for and with children. TIE aims to fuse education and theatre by having team members function as both teachers and actors, and the audiences of young people participate as both themselves and characters. TIE programs can be grouped into five categories ranging from full participation (category I), to full performance (category V). Topics that can be explored through TIE are personal freedom, peer pressure, and racial tolerance, leading students to consider their values of fairness, equality, individuality, and independence. Three programs suggesting the nature and range of TIE programs are at the Cockpit Theatre in London, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Northern Iowa. (Discussion of the objectives and procedures in each program comprises the major portion of this paper.) (EL)

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Teaching Values Through Drama

Gretta Berghammer*

Teaching values through the use of drama is not a radically new idea. In 1966 Melvin Bogin wrote a thesis entitled: "Values Transmitted to Children's Theatre Audiences by Children's Theatre." Since then, artists and educators have continued to probe the connection between pedagogy and dramatic art forms. Unfortunately, when parents, teachers and administrators are are approached about examining values through drama, they are often reluctant, in fear that social or political positions will be advocated to students. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In contrast to these fears, and belying the title of Bogin's thesis, educational drama should be used to explore values, not transmit predetermined convictions. All children, regardless of age, enter the classroom with some values--values they have acquired often unknowingly from their parents, peers, siblings and teachers. When unexamined, these acquired values can result in quick reactions and thoughtless behaviors. Dramatic techniques can be used to help students discover their own personal values, aid them in understanding how these

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values shape their responses to issues and events, and encourage recognition and tolerance of differing values which are part of a pluralistic culture.

One dramatic technique to aid students in their discovery of values and value systems is Theatre-in-Education (TIE). TIE is defined as a theatre event that takes place in schools, composed of actors working through roles for and with children. The event that is being performed is clearly relevant to the curriculum and is created with a specific <u>educational</u> aim in mind. Developed in England in the early 1960's, TIE aims to fuse education and theatre by having team members function as both teachers and actors. Its basis is dramatic conflict.[1]

The audiences of young people participate as observers and doers. They are addressed and invited to participate in the TIE program both as themselves and as characters. Through the TIE program, discovery and identification can reach new levels because everyone is actively involved in the dramatized event. The situation that the actors and audiences find themselves in may be <u>make-believe</u> but what is happening to them and their responses to it is real.

TIE programs can be grouped into five categories which range from full participation (category I) to full performance (category V).[2] TIE fits well into current programs and priorities of public schools. With so much emphasis on "back to basics" education, TIE becomes an ideal tool for providing dramatic opportunities in the classroom without having to subtract time from other curriculum subjects. TIE can be used to effectively create a process for value discovery by integrating subjects such

as history, English, social studies, language arts, and geography. This linking of theatre with "content" curriculum allows a simultaneous study of objective facts and subjective responses to those facts. Young people can "try on" characters whose views, opinions, and values oppose or differ from their own in order to gain new perspectives. It provides for them opportunities to work collectively, creatively, imaginatively and risk free--opportunities which are often lacking in traditional learning situations. The elimination of the failure factor helps to reinforce a positive self-image in the participant. Students discover there are differences among people which can no longer be labeled as either good or bad. The TIE technique exposes them to areas of gray in human thought and actions.

Among the topics that can be explored through TIE are personal freedom, peer pressure, and racial tolerance--topics which lead students to consider their values of fairness, equality, individuality and independence. The programs developed by TIE teams grew directly out of the needs of young people who were communicating to teachers, counselors and parents that they <u>wanted</u> to know about issues that were already touching, and sometimes troubling, their daily lives. While TIE does not guarantee answers, it does affirm the importance of knowledge and provides simulated events which illuminate and supplement personal experience. TIE tries to replace innocence with insight by providing students with opportunities to flex their own social muscles and test their own consciences safely. It enables them to adopt characters, points of view and values

different from their own or society's. They can be anti-social, unpopular, radical or conservative in a controlled experience that is purely for them. TIE asks only that they take a risk by taking on and portraying a character, and working to understand rather than judge the motivation of that character.

The following three examples suggest the nature and range of TIE programs. At the Cockpit Theatre in London, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Northern Iowa, the author was involved in improvisational rehearsals and research which led to the development of the script, and the implementation of the program in area schools. The objectives and procedures in each program are summarized below.

TIE IN ENGLAND

The Cockpit Theatre has been producing TIE programs since the early 1960's. Like most British TIE teams, the Cockpit Theatre performers are trained as actors and teachers. The author interned with the Cockpit TIE team during January, 1977, and worked with the company on their project entitled Fall-Out.

Fall-Out is a single, half-day program that enables students in grades five and up to explore how human life would change in the event of a nuclear attack. It begins with a 30-minute presentation by the team which outlines the type of destruction that would occur to all of Great Britian if a nuclear warhead were dropped on London. It describes the national defense system that would be put into operation if such an emergency arose and presents the audience with an example of the instructions they would receive in such an event. Once this common basis has been established, the audience is ready to become participants.

The students help the team transform the playing space into a nuclear fall-out shelter. An actual floor plan is taped out, and a "supplies" cabinet brought in. The team members don costumes and assume the role of government and military personnel. Each student participant is given a role card which outlines the character he/she is to "play" for the remainder of the event.

Once everyone has assumed a character and all are assembled in the shelter, the role-playing event begins. The actors, in character, lead the students through a variety of realistic crises, encouraging the students to respond to the threats made on their lives as the characters they are portraying might respond.

The result is a one to two hour improvisation placing human against human in an environment they cannot escape, forcing them to battle out their differences and seek ways to solve such problems as rulemaking, division of supplies, and living arrangements. The students must find ways to govern themselves in the shelter, cope with the stress of living among strangers, and consider whether to continue living under such conditions or to end it all with "painless" death.

The program enactment gives the students exposure to varying opinions, yet asks of them all: what is the value of human life?

TIE IN TEXAS

In February 1981, a group of graduate students in Creative Drama/Theatre for Youth at The University of Texas at Austin

formed an experimental TIE troupe to see if theatre-in-education could be developed and implemented within an established curriculum at area elementary schools. The team met with teachers from various grade levels to determine which age groups might best be served by the TIE program. The team eventually chose to work with second grade teachers in developing a curriculum based TIE presentation that would explore the theme "Facts and Assumptions."

The elementary teachers confirmed that second graders experience difficulties viewing events from others' points of view. Their limited skills in abstract thinking often cause them to judge someone or something as good or bad based on an initial observation. These snap judgements cause them difficulties in their language arts, science and math studies, and carry over into the classroom and playground in the form of peer pressure, clique formation, and bullying. Therefore, the troupe's goal was two-fold: create a program that would define the difference between a fact and an assumption, and demonstrate that recognition of such differences is important to academic and social learning.

The troupe developed a TIE program entitled <u>All That Glitters</u> and visited the classroom for three two-hour sessions. The first visit offered definitions of facts and assumptions; facts were defined as those things you know to be true without a doubt and assumptions were defined as educated guesses based on limited observations. Once a working definition had been established, the team presented the warm-up section of their

performance program: a 90-minute collection of riddles, skits, puzzles and magic tricks all designed to demonstrate how we use facts and assumptions daily to solve problems. While the second graders themselves did not perform, they actively participated. For example, students were invited into the playing space and challenged to use facts and assumptions to determine how magic tricks were executed. Laminated puzzle pieces were distributed to small groups of students, forcing them to work together using assumptions to connect puzzle shapes. Some students were given a quiz in which they had to determine which of two similar objects was real, based solely on visual observation. As students got answer after answer incorrect, they began to see how often assumptions can be wrong.

The second part of the TIE program was designed to show the second graders a series of skits that portrayed a variety of every day situations in which someone's feelings are hurt or the wrong person is blamed for doing something wrong because an incorrect assumption has been made. Each skit was presented twice; the first presentation gave a hint of the nature of the action and showed the incorrect assumption. The replay presented all the facts to the audience so they could see for themselves what the correct conclusion should have been. In the interim, the students tried to assemble the facts they were given in order to reach the correct conclusion before seeing the replay.

This process was repeated illustrating a variety of situations and scenes. Each time the students tried to guess the correct assumption before the TIE company repeated the situation,

adding all the facts. The differences in opinions were briefly discussed after each replay, and a summary by the company leader was given at the end of the day.

The third visit was a two hour meeting designed to take the skills that had been tested and stimulated during the previous days' performances, and put them to practical use by the children. The second graders were divided into groups, and each group was assigned a TIE member to assist it. The groups were instructed to role-play a situation that occurred in their lives when someone made an incorrect assumption that hurt others. Each group presented its scene, and the class identified the facts and assumptions in each.

The program added the words fact and assumption to the second graders vocabularies and helped them to recognize that truth is often complicated.

TIE IN IOWA

The TIE program is the most recent addition to the University of Northern Iowa's 25-year-old child drama program. The purpose of this TIE program is to unite students from various disciplines (education, theatre performance, psychology, and social work), and provide for them an opportunity to work collectively to meet the needs of young people in area schools.

The idea of creating a TIE performance based specifically on emotional child abuse and its effects on self-esteem and self-concept grew out of a summer fellowship grant awarded to the author. Convinced that a theatre piece was one of the best ways to inform young poeple about abuse, the author began

an intensive four-week research process to learn more about the subject area. Her readings indicated that little was being done nationally to bring attention to emotional abuse, and that TIE, because of the hands-on experience it afforded its audience, was the best tool by which to tackle this subject and at the same time address the value of positive self-concept.

Once the focus for this TIE program was established, the author formed a TIE team by offering a course entitled "Seminar in Theatre-in-Education." Fifteen students enrolled whose majors included those previously mentioned. This diversity was welcomed because of the integration of ideas and subject matter it so readily afforded.

The author and students explored the topic through lectures, guest speakers, films, and readings from current literature including fiction, non-fiction and dramatic works. This intensive study period was followed by a three week period of improvisation, and this work became some of the most valuable to company members. For the first time many of the concepts and characteristics of emotional abuse came to life; painful memories surfaced, respect for the method by which they were working developed; and a true spirit of ensemble emerged.

The author, meanwhile, chronicled the improvisational material created by the company, and combined this with notes from the classes' research to create the final program script.

The final product is a two-part program designed for third, fourth, and fifth graders. Part I is composed of a full team performance entitled <u>The Right Stuff</u>. Performed before an assembly of the three grades, this 45-minute presentation is

composed of five scenes, each illustrating a different way someone can hurt another's feelings and identifying options for dealing with that hurt.

Scene One introduces the concept of a positive self-image and the benefit of a high self-esteem. It defines the difference between feeling good about oneself and being conceited. The concept of the N'T Syndrome is also introduced, the syndrome that most often contributes to low self-esteem. It is exhibited in thoughts and feelings such as: I can't do that...They don't like me...I won't ever be as good as they are.... Also in this scene are demonstrations of how name calling and bullying can hurt another's feelings and cause the N'T Syndrome to start. These demonstrations show that the N'T Syndrome can only be cured when victims realize that there are things they can be good at and people who do like them. The team refers to this sense of feeling good about oneself as being full of "the right stuff."

Scene Two illustrates how, at times, parents or other adults can hurt feelings while trying to help. The adults portrayed in this section do not like to hurt feelings, but in these examples hurting is necessary to help or protect another, such as a doctor administering a shot or a parent giving positive discipline.

Scene Three shows how others sometimes hurt our feelings by accident. The things they say may seem trivial to them, but they are tampering with someone else's feelings. What they say can often make another feel dumb, ugly, unpopular, slow or clumsy. The scene stresses how important it is to realize that

the hurt is not intentional. Persons hurting with words do not mean what they are saying, nor do they understand how their words may be hurting others.

In Scene Four people's feelings are hurt intentionally and maliciously. A definition of emotional abuse is presented: hurting someone with words over and over again until it is a regular part of his/her life. It is pointed out that all of us have hurt another person's feelings at one time or another. This does not mean all of us are guilty of emotional abuse; only individuals who have made the hurting a regular part of someone else's life are guilty.

The examples in this scene show people intentionally hurting others with words. In each case, what is said is meant. The hurt and intention combine to destroy the self-concept and self-esteem of another. Scene Five summarizes the points made in the other four scenes, and repeats the options children have for making their self-esteem strong.

Part II is presented the following day to the same audience, but in smaller groups. The team divides into groups of three and works for 45-minutes in individual classrooms. This post-program is the most important step in the entire TIE process, and distinguishes this program from other traditional touring theatre offerings for youth.

The actors in the post-program review concepts from the previous days' performance. These include the ways people hurt our feelings, the definition of emotional abuse, the N'T Syndrome, and options for keeping self-esteem high. The team then

ENDNOTES

[1]Nellie McCaslin, Creative Drama in the Classroom. (New York: Longman, 1984), pp. 297-99.

[2]Suzan Zeder, "Theatre-In-Education Format Chart," Unpublished, 1975.

[3]Copies of the scripts discussed in this article are available from the author for $2.50 each. A videotape (VHS or Beta) is also available of The Right Stuff for $10.00. For more information or to place an order contact Gretta Berghammer: Communication and Theatre Arts, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614 (319-273-2149).

"Teaching Values Through Drama" cites reasons why values education should be a part of the regular elementary and secondary curriculum. The article also gives examples of how the Theatre-in-Education process helps provide a means for value exploration. Three such TIE programs are described.